

**Address by Fr. Patrick Courtney, Provincial of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart  
at the Tierney Memorial Ceremony in Churchtown on 10 October 2009**

It is indeed a privilege and an honour for me, and for my fellow Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, to be invited here today to this very special commemorative ceremony by the Churchtown Village Renewal Trust, remembering and fondly acknowledging the lives and ministries of Mother St. Urban, Bons Secour Sister and Frs. Michael and Jeremiah Tierney.

It is very obvious that their memories live on in the minds and the hearts of people today in their native village of Churchtown many years after their deaths. Sr. Urban, Frs. Michael and Jeremiah left this beautiful rural landscape of north Cork to dedicate their lives as religious in the service of Jesus Christ. They embraced the call of the Lord – Come, follow me – and with wholehearted love and dedication they spent their lives in the service of the mission of Christ. In so doing, they left their family and travelled far from home following the road the Lord planned for them. In their journeys of life they produced very rich harvests in the vineyard of the Lord.

Today in their home village we salute the deep faith, courage, conviction, generosity and indomitable missionary spirit of all three of them.

The young congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was truly blessed by the Lord when Michael Tierney made his first profession of vows as a member in November 1979 in France and was ordained to the priesthood on 29 March 1884. A number of years afterwards his brother, Jeremiah, likewise felt called to be a Missionary of the Sacred Heart, and did so in 1904 in Australia.

Both of them were outstanding missionaries. Each of them laboured unceasingly in promoting the mission our founder, Fr. Jules Chevalier, received from the Lord. This mission was then, and is today, summed up in our motto – “May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere known and loved”.

Fr. Michael was a man who pioneered the first foundation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Ireland at Western Road in Cork one hundred years ago in 1909. He was a man of great vision and was endowed with tremendous leadership qualities and abilities.

After 13 years of ministry in Sydney, Australia, followed by 10 further years of ministry in England, he returned to Ireland convinced that his native county would prove to be a fertile soil for vocations to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Having acquired Dyke House on the Western Road in early 1909, he had a minor seminary up and running a few months later in September with 12 boys in attendance and also had established the first community of the Society in Ireland.

Thus, began a time of God’s blessing and favour on our congregation, a time of many vocations, a time when many of our priests were missioned from the church in Western Road to serve overseas in the foreign missions of New Guinea, southern Africa, Indonesia, Venezuela, and more recently Russia. All this was achieved through the prayers and the financial support of our thousands of benefactors down the years.

This is the centenary of our beginning in Ireland. I think it is the hand of providence that we have this commemorative ceremony during our centenary.

I was really excited when towards the end of 2007 I received a letter from Denis Hickey of the Tierney Memorial Committee asking if I could provide him with as much information as possible about Frs. Michael and Jeremiah Tierney as the committee in their native Churchtown was planning to erect a plaque to honour them and their sister, Mother St. Urban. He added: “When that happens, you will receive an invitation to the celebration”.

That day has arrived and I am delighted and honoured to be here. I thank Denis who was the inspiration behind this project along with Noel Linehan and Gerry Murphy. May the lives and achievements of the three Tierneys be an inspiration to all of us as we continue the mission of Jesus to bring the Good News to others in our time.